MEGALOSESQUIPEDALIA

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Silent Logologists everywhere, Arise! Speak out! Be heard! A most disturbing and sinister event has occurred. SOMEONE has unilaterally decreed the end to megalosesquipedalia!

To document The Longest Word, Dmitri Borgmann, in Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965), had to resort to a 100-letter combination of gibberish from Finnegans Wake, a 182-letter translation from Aristophanes (a contrived word for "hash"), and a 666-letter surname of a publicity-seeking man from Philadelphia. In his second book, Beyond Language (Scribner's, 1967), Borgmann discovered the nomenclature of polypeptides. He claimed a second-longest word of 1179 letters, and the then-longest word: the 1185-letter name for "Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Dahlemense Strain". This is a legitimate word, being the direct result of an established nomenclature system applied to the structure of a naturally-occurring polymer molecule. It's found in Chemical Abstracts, the chemistry watchdog service of the prestigious American Chemical Society.

Clearly, words that truly are words, with real meanings, that can grow longer and longer, must come from chemistry. In anticipation, Beyond Language mentioned that the name for HGH would have 1385 letters, and the February 1968 issue of Word Ways printed the full name for "Tryptophan Synthetase A", with 1913 letters.

But meanwhile, back at Chemical Abstracts, the crafty SOMEONE had other plans. He ignored HGH's real name and abstracted the article using the abbreviations "Phe-Pro-Thr-" etc., instead of the proper PHENYLALANYLPROLYLTHREONYL- etc. There went 1385! The sly SOMEONE further instructed that the Formula Index in Chemical Abstracts under the entry

$$C_{1289}H_{2152}N_{344}O_{374}S_8$$

have only the trivial name "Synthases Tryptophan" and not the full scientific name. There went 1913!

But the fiendish SOMEONE left us with a further dilemma: there is no second-longest word! Borgmann miscounted -- his earlier second-longest really has 1178 letters, not 1179. But Chemical Abstracts has still another word with 1178 letters. We can't speak of 1178, but rather must use 1178-A and 1178-B.

1178-B differs from 1178-A only in having one -VALYL- and one -ISOLEUCYL- grouping moved back one unit (hence not changing the letter-count) and three -GLUTAMINYL- units changed to -GLUTAMYL-, exactly compensated for by two -ASPARTYL- units changed to -ASPARAGINYL-. If readers don't follow this, let us hasten to explain that the IN-type units differ chemically in having a nitrogen and a hydrogen in place of an oxygen. Hence, logology tells us 1178-A should have one more nitrogen, one more hydrogen, and one less oxygen atom than 1178-B. Yet, Chemical Abstracts gives

$$A = C_{777}H_{1219}N_{217}O_{244}S \qquad B = C_{778}H_{1218}N_{216}O_{244}S$$

Clearly a confusion of a carbon for an oxygen. The error is compounded since the two entries are now out of order; 1178-A should follow 1178-B.

When confronted with this logological evidence, Chemical Abstracts admitted their mistake; and they will revise 1178-A in the next Collective Formula Index, due in about five years.

Despite this victory for logology, Chemical Abstracts still refuses to name 1385 and 1913. We are informed they will follow the convention of J. Biol. Chem. 242 (4), 555-7 (1967). This means there is only a very slight chance for ever surpassing 1185, now that the old nomenclature system has been replaced.

Since 1185 may be the longest word you will ever see, perhaps the longest word for all time, we print it on the following page. Memorize it. Work it into a conversation. Use it three times and it's yours!

ACETYLSERYLTYROSYLSERYLISOLEUCYL-
THREONYLSERYLPROLYLSERYLGLUTAMINYL-
PHENYLALANYLVALYLPHENYLALANYLLEUCYL-
SERYLSERYLVALYLTRYPTOPHYLALANYL-
ASPARTYLPROLYLISOLEUCYLGLUTAMYLLEUCYL-
LEUCYLASPARAGINYLVALYLCYSTEINYL-
THREONYLSERYLSERYLLEUCYLGLYCYL-
ASPARAGINYLGLUTAMINYLPHENYLALANYL-
GLUTAMINYLTHREONYLGLUTAMINYLGLUTAMINYL-
ALANYLARGINYLTHREONYLTHREONYL-
GLUTAMINYLVALYLGLUTAMINYLGLUTAMINYL-
PHENYLALANYLSERYLGLUTAMINYLVALYL-
TRYPTOPHYLLYSYLPROLYLPHENYLALANYL-
PROLYLGLUTAMINYLSERYLTHREONYLVALYL-
ARGINYLPHENYLALANYLPROLYLGLYCYL-
ASPARTYLVALYLTYROSYLLYSYLVALYLTYROSYL-
ARGINYLTYROSYLASPARAGINYLALANYLVALYL-
LEUCYLASPARTYLPROLYLLEUCYLISOLEUCYL-
THREONYLALANYLLEUCYLLEUCYLGLYCYL-
THREONYLPHENYLALANYLASPARTYLTHREONYL-
ARGINYLASPARAGINYLARGINYLISOLEUCYL-
ISOLEUCYLGLUTAMYLVALYLGLUTAMYL-
ASPARAGINYLGLUTAMINYLGLUTAMINYLSERYL-
PROLYLTHREONYLTHREONYLALANYLGLUTAMYL-
THREONYLLEUCYLASPARTYLALANYLTHREONYL-
ARGINYLARGINYLVALYLASPARTYLASPARTYL-
ALANYLTHREONYLVALYLALANYLISOLEUCYL-
ARGINYLSERYLALANYLASPARAGINYLISOLEUCYL-
ASPARAGINYLLEUCYLVALYLASPARAGINYL-
GLUTAMYLLEUCYLVALYLARGINYLGLYCYL-
THREONYLGLYCYLLEUCYLTYROSYLASPARAGINYL-
GLUTAMINYLASPARAGINYLTHREONYL-
PHENYLALANYLGLUTAMYLSERYLMETHIONYL-
SERYLGLYCYLLEUCYLVALYLTRYPTOPHYL-
THREONYLSERYLALANYLPROLYLALANYLSERINE